

## Reptiles of Little Tobago Island, West Indies

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FROM 23 September 1965 to 4 July 1966 I had the opportunity to observe and collect a small series of reptiles from 280-acre Little Tobago Island in the southern West Indies. Although Underwood (1962) says the island would be worth collecting, to my knowledge this has not been done previously and the herpetofauna has remained unknown.

Little Tobago, located at  $11^{\circ}18'N$ ,  $60^{\circ}30'W$ , is one mile off the northeast coast of Tobago. The island is very hilly with a maximum elevation of 460 feet. Although rainfall for 1966, the only year for which records are available, totalled over 85 inches, a severe dry season lasts from February to April or May. Other than rainfall, the only fresh water supply is one small seepage "spring". This lack of any ponds has apparently prevented amphibians from colonizing the island. Steep cliffs on the windward sides of Little Tobago are covered with thick tangles of cactus and low brush. Much of the rest of the island is covered with a deciduous seasonal forest (Beard, 1944), parts of which were severely damaged by Hurricane Flora in 1963. Although no one lives there permanently now, the two small cabins have had human occupants from time to time in the past.

I found seven species of lizards and one snake on Little Tobago and one other lizard may be present. I collected specimens of seven species and they now are in the collection of the Florida State Museum, Gainesville, Florida. Figures in parenthesis at the end of each account indicate the number of specimens placed in that collection. I used the keys in Underwood (1962) for identification.

Other than bats, the only mammal reported from Little Tobago is a tree rat (*Rhipidomys nitela*) described from a specimen supposedly taken on Little Tobago (Goodwin, 1961) but I believe that the collecting locality listed may be wrong. This apparent lack of land mammals and the fact that the island is a sanctuary may have given the fauna some protection.

*Iguana iguana*. Although I saw this species only a few times, it apparently is fairly common in the thick brush on the windward side of the island. Even though Little Tobago is a game sanctuary,

iguanas are probably hunted periodically by local people. I was unable to secure a specimen.

*Gonatodes ocellatus*. This gecko is common in the wooded parts, particularly in stands of the palm *Coccothrinax australis*. There I often saw them on the tree trunks or they hid in the thick root masses of the aroid *Anthurium hookeri* that covered the ground. UF 26256-26263 (8).

*Sphaerodactylus molei*. This gecko is common in the two cabins. The specimens seem typical of the *Sphaerodactylus* found on Tobago (King, 1962). UF 26248-26249 (2).

*Hemidactylus mabouia*. This species is common in the two cabins and I occasionally saw one on a tree trunk in the forest. UF 26252-26255 (4).

*Thecadactylus rapicauda*. Like the above species, this gecko is common in the cabins and occasionally is seen in wooded areas. UF 26244 (1).

*Ameiva ameiva*. This is the most conspicuous reptile on the island, being abundant throughout. I found ticks of the species *Amblyomma dissimile* on several individuals. UF 26245-26247 (3).

*Cnemidophorus lemniscatus*. This species is common in open areas along the rocky shoreline, especially on the sandy beach on the west side of the island. UF 26250-26251 (2).

*Scolecosaurus trinitatus*. On 11 June 1966 I saw an adult Blue-crowned Motmot (*Momotus momota*) bring an unfamiliar lizard to feed to its young. The lizard was 3-4 inches long, brown in color with a reddish brown underside, a blunt tail, and very small legs. The body appeared segmented by transverse rings. I was unable to collect the lizard but viewed it through a 20 power spotting scope from 100 feet for about 5 minutes. Dr. T. H. G. Aitken (*in litt.*) of the Trinidad Regional Virus Laboratory has pointed out that my description bests fits *Scolecosaurus*, a lizard known from Tobago only on the evidence of a tail picked up on the northeast end of Tobago (Underwood, 1962). I never saw motmots flying from Little Tobago to Tobago so the lizard must have been caught on the island. Several times while turning over rotten logs I glimpsed worm-like animals rapidly burrowing away. These may have been this species but for now the record must remain hypothetical.

*Drymobius boddaerti*. The only snake on the island, this species is common throughout. I also found ticks of the species *Amblyomma dissimile* on several snakes. UF 26264 (1).

Of the seven lizards reported here from Little Tobago, six are known to occur on Tobago, only *Gonatodes ocellatus* not being listed by Underwood (1962) for that island. All seven also occur on nearby Trinidad. The snake is also found on both Trinidad and Tobago. Thus of the 12 lizards Underwood (1962) lists for Tobago, 6 are found on Little Tobago, certainly a high percentage for such a small island with limited habitats. *Hemidactylus* undoubtedly was introduced by humans much as it was throughout the West Indies but the other species are probably native to the island.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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